

Thai Constellation Monstera {beginner}

Thai Constellation Monstera plants can be pricey. I joke that if I paint one, I can't kill it. I love painting variegated leaves. It offers a lot of opportunity to practice blending, softening edges, and lifting. The organic nature of plants provides a lot of room for variation. No two leaves will look alike. The plant and leaves even change as the plant ages, so you can't paint it wrong. You will also practice negative painting with this piece, leaving the pale ochre areas of the leaves light and painting Hooker's Green around them.

Be unique to you, and paint in your own style. Every time you paint you discover something new!

- 1. Background** ~ Tape your paper down. See *Introduction to Watercolor* sheet. I used a light tint of Rose Madder wet on wet, gently painting around the leaves, but feel free to paint the background with any color you wish. A light tint is probably best. Wet the background with water and then fill it in with a little color, wet in wet. Test your brush on scrap paper to ensure you have the correct value before adding the paint. Let dry.
- 2. Leaves, Ochre Layer** ~ Start with a very pale Yellow Ochre wash of pigment, 5% or so, over the leaves and stems. Test your color on scrap paper. Yellow ochre can be strong. Just a light tint will do, as you want it to appear a creamy white color. This will also help the Hooker's Green appear more natural and earthy later. Let dry.
- 3. Leaves, Green & Ultramarine Blue Layers** ~ Use a tint of Hooker's Green over much of the leaves and the stems, painting around any areas you would like to leave 'white' (Yellow Ochre). Let dry. Once dry, add additional layers of Hooker's Green on top of some of the existing green areas for additional variation. If you would like even deeper, darker green areas in some places add a gentle layer of Ultramarine Blue on top of some of the Hooker's Green, including an edge of each stem. Let dry.
- 4. Lifting Details** ~ If you would like some lighter areas and stripe-like variegation, gently lift off some green. See 'Lifting' in the instructions. Lift some highlight on the stems too to help create form.
- 5. Sign your work!** Tape it into the mat if you'd like to display it.



Color Palette

-  **Rose Madder**
background
-  **Yellow Ochre**
plant leaves base layer
-  **Hooker's Green**
plant leaves top layer
-  **Ultramarine Blue**
layered on green for darkest
green values on plant leaves,
if desired

Pink Princess Philodendron {beginner}

Plants are a good beginner subject, due to their organic shapes and coloring. No two are alike, so there is a lot of room to make it your own. I've chosen Rose Madder and Hooker's Green for a Pink Princess Philodendron, but you could also paint it as a White Knight Philodendron, leaving the white of the paper for areas of the leaves, rather than pink. Choose any color you'd like for the pot and background, but use the Project Color Palette Card to choose colors before painting the final piece.

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- 1. Background** ~ Tape your paper down. See *Introduction to Watercolor* sheet. Wet the top 2/3 background with water and then fill it in with a 10% tint of Rose Madder, wet in wet. I painted around the leaves. Test your brush on scrap paper to ensure you have the correct value before adding the paint. Let dry. Then wet the bottom 1/3 background with water. Lay in very pale Ultramarine Blue (a 10% tint or so). Let dry.
- 2. Pink Leaves** ~ Use very light (20%) Rose Madder on much of the leaves. Test your brush to make sure you have the correct amount of Rose Madder prior to painting. Paint around any leaf area you would like pure green in color. Let dry. Gently add additional layers of Rose Madder on top of existing Rose Madder areas, using more paint and less water. Add pink veining by using almost dry paint, just enough water to get the paint to move, and hold your brush almost vertical. Practice some thin strokes on scrap paper first.
- 3. Green Leaves** ~ Paint the remaining areas of the leaves Hooker's Green. Start with a light tint. Let dry. Add additional layers of Hooker's on top of the green where you would like the leaves darker. You can also gently paint a 10% tint of Hooker's on top of some of the Rose Madder areas. Practice this on your Project Color Palette first. Be gentle so you don't make brown. You want the Hooker's to gently sit on top of the Rose Madder.
- 4. Lifting** ~ Gently lift off veins in the pink and green leaf areas using a clean, damp brush (see 'Lifting' in Basic Techniques). Make sure to clean and dry your brush often when lifting.
- 5. Pot** ~ Keep in mind the light on the top left of the pot. I chose to paint the pot in sections with different tints of Payne's Gray. I kept the top edge and top band light at 10%. Let dry. Then paint a slight gradient on the inside back edge of the pot. Finally, paint the main body of the pot a 30% tint of Payne's Gray, using a bit darker Gray on the right side of the pot. Let dry. Lift off a highlight on the left side using a clean, damp brush (see 'Lifting' in Basic Techniques).
- 6. Cast Shadow** ~ Gently paint a small cast shadow with Payne's Gray just under the large leaf in the front to help it sit just above the pot. Add additional darker edges of Payne's Gray along the trim of the pot if desired.
- 7. Sign your work!** Tape it into the mat if you'd like to display it.



Color Palette

-  **Rose Madder**
background top 2/3, plant leaves
-  **Hooker's Green**
plant leaves
-  **Ultramarine Blue**
background bottom 1/3
-  **Payne's Gray**
plant pot

Snake Plant {intermediate}

The variegated pattern on the snake plant's sword-like leaves offers plenty of practice adding texture with layering. Choose any color you'd like for the pot and background, but use the Project Palette Card to choose colors before painting the final piece. Keep the background soft and light, so the plant remains the subject of the painting and comes forward.

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1. **Background** ~ Tape your paper down. See *Introduction to Watercolor* sheet. Wet the background with water; then fill it in with a little color, wet in wet. I used a light Payne's Gray. Test your brush on scrap paper to ensure you have the correct value before adding the paint to the final painting. Let dry.
2. **Yellow Edges** ~ Paint the edges of each leaf with Lemon Yellow in a thin strip. Let dry.
3. **Main Leaf Color** ~ Paint the main body of each leaf in a light Sap Green. The Sap Green will be light at the top of the leaf, where it gets more light. The leaves get a bit darker green as it moves towards the soil, as less light will reach this part of the leaves. Let dry.
4. **Variegation Detail** ~ Use more intense Sap Green for much of the variegation pattern, in almost a dry paint. Use just enough water to get the paint to flow. Paint vertical strokes in varying heights for the variegated texture. Let dry. Use Hooker's Green in the same manner for the darker variegated texture, especially towards the bottom of the leaves.
5. **Pot** ~ Use a pale Rose Madder to paint the pot. Let dry. Lift off the highlight of the top edge of the pot. See 'Lifting' in the Basic Watercolor Techniques. Add in some thin darker lines of Rose Madder for edging detail using mainly paint and very little water.
6. **Soil** ~ Use Burnt Umber to paint the soil in the pot. Let dry. Stipple (adding tiny dots) of darker Burnt Umber for soil texture, concentrating it more just at the base of the leaves. Let dry. Stipple (tiny dots) some Payne's Gray on top of the Burnt Umber just at the base of the leaves to add additional shadow.
7. **Sign your work!** Tape it into the matte if you'd like to display it.



Color Palette

-  **Rose Madder**
plant pot
-  **Lemon Yellow**
leaf edges
-  **Permanent Sap**
main body of leaves,
variegated texture
-  **Hooker's Green**
variegated texture and
shadow on leaves
-  **Burnt Umber**
dirt in pot
-  **Payne's Gray**
background, shadow in dirt

String of Pearls {intermediate}

The String of Pearls succulent plant offers a meditative painting experience. You will get practice adding shadow areas to the small bead-like spheres, which are the leaves of this unique trailing plant. I kept a simple three color palette for this piece, using Sap Green for the window coloring too. But, you can get creative and use other colors in the window to suggest a different time of year or place. Use a Project Palette Card to choose colors before painting the final piece.

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- 1. Window Background** ~ Tape your paper down. See *Introduction to Watercolor* sheet. Wet the window, one pane at a time, with water and then fill it in with a little Sap Green, about 10% tint, wet in wet. Test your brush on scrap paper to ensure you have the correct value before adding the paint. Let dry.
- 2. Window Frame & Wall Behind the Plant** ~ With a light Payne's Gray start painting the window frame and the wall behind the plant. I start light with about 10%. Make sure to paint around where the green of the plant will go. I add darker gray as needed with additional layers and/or lines, letting each layer dry in between.
- 3. Wall Shadow** ~ Paint the darker wall shadow with about 40% Payne's Gray - the small wall strip on the left and the wall under the sill. Let dry.
- 4. String of Pearls** ~ Paint a light Sap Green in the pot for the base color of the pearls. Let dry. Paint small circles in slightly varying sizes with more Sap Green. Paint the circles in somewhat linear lines, slightly apart from each other, falling down and over the pot, and onto the sill. The circles get smaller as they approach the end of the 'string'. Let dry. Connect the 'pearls' into strings by painting thin lines of Sap Green between the pearls. Add Hooker's Green on the bottom left of each 'pearl' to create the spherical look. Add Hooker's Green to some of the string where they are in the shadows. Lift paint off the pearls top right side with a clean, damp brush to create highlights.
- 5. Plant Pot** ~ Use Payne's Gray to paint the pot, painting around the pearls. Paint the pot darker on the left side, as it is away from the light of the window, and lighter on the right side.
- 6. Sill & Cast Shadows** ~ Paint the cast shadows with a light Payne's Gray on the sill under the window frame, on the front of the sill, and under the string of pearls laying on the sill. Paint the cast shadow of the the pot on the sill too, to the left of the pot. Add Payne's Gray underneath some of the pearls in the pot. This helps create depth in the pot and separate some of the pearls.
- 7. Sign your work!** Tape it into the matte if you'd like to display it.



Color Palette

-  **Payne's Gray**
background walls, sill, window frame, cast shadows, pot
-  **Sap Green**
window, base/pearls for plant, strings of plant in varying values, including some shadowing
-  **Hooker's Green**
shadows on pearls and strings, if desired